



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Socorro Field Office
198 Neel Avenue NW
Socorro, New Mexico 87801

IN REPLY REFER TO:
NMNM 101695
2740 (050)

March 28, 2001

Dear Reader:

We are pleased to announce the availability of the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed Camino Real International Heritage Center. These environmental analyses have been conducted in a full partnership between the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and New Mexico Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA). If this project goes forward, it will continue to be a full partnership through our joint construction, operation, and management of the proposed Center.

The BLM and OCA have jointly completed this EA under the National Environmental Policy Act. The EA addresses all of the foreseeable potential effects of the proposed Camino Real International Heritage Center. Among alternatives considered are management changes for certain public lands surrounding the proposed Center, which would require amendment of the Socorro BLM Resource Management Plan (RMP). Therefore, this document consists of a BLM Resource Management Plan Amendment as well as the joint BLM/State Environmental Assessment (RMPA/EA).

This RMPA/EA has been in progress for approximately a year with the cooperation, support, and input of other federal, state, and local agencies, and the general public. Public scoping meetings were held in the towns of Socorro and Truth or Consequences on April 5 and 6, 2000 respectively, and issues and comments raised by members of the public and officials were taken into account and included in these analyses. Socorro County, Sierra County, and the Bureau of Reclamation participated as cooperating agencies.

While these analyses were in progress, in October, 2000, the U.S. Congress passed a bill designating El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro (The Royal Road to the Interior Lands) officially as a "National Historic Trail." This designation carries important responsibilities for managing the trail, which have been assigned jointly to BLM and the National Park Service (NPS). This national recognition affirms the importance the BLM and OCA have placed on the historic trail through our partnership in this project.

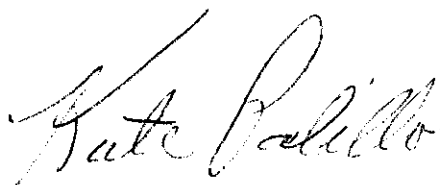
The analyses conclude that Alternative 2 is the preferred alternative of both agencies. This alternative includes management stipulations for certain surrounding public lands described in the document. The BLM's authority to amend the existing Socorro RMP is contained in the Federal Land Policy Act of 1976 and is further defined under Title 43 of the Federal Code of Regulations (CFR), Subpart 1610.5-5.

All parts of the proposed plan may be protested. Protests must be postmarked no later than May 4, 2001. Protests must be sent to the Director (WO-210), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Attn: Brenda Williams, 1849 C Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20240. In accordance with 43 CFR 1610.5-2, only those persons who participated in the planning process may protest. At the end of the 30-day protest period, the Plan, excluding any portions under protest, will become final. A Decision Record including any stipulations and mitigation measures and an Approval Plan will be published following resolution of any protests.

Since this action would include transfer of 120 acres of federal public lands to the State of New Mexico under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act of 1954 (68 Statute 173; 43 U.S. Code 869 et. seq.), a Notice of Realty Action will be published in the Federal Register after the Decision Record has been completed if the proposed transfer of land is approved. This will begin a 45-day comment period regarding the classification and the specific realty decision. Instructions for commenting on both will be included in the Federal Register notice.

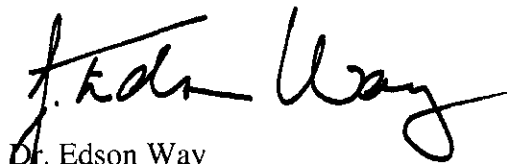
Those not protesting the proposed plan amendment but who wish to provide a comment or comments to the Joint Lead Agencies to be considered in the preparation of the Decision Record may do so. Please send written comments to: Bureau of Land Management, Attn: Charles Carroll, 198 Neel St., Socorro, NM 87801. In order to be considered in preparation of the Decision Record, comments must be postmarked by May 7, 2001.

If you have any questions regarding the RMPA/EA, contact Charles Carroll, Bureau of Land Management, Socorro Field Office at (505)-838-1278.



Kate Padilla
Socorro Field Manager

Sincerely,



Dr. Edson Way
NM Office Of Cultural Affairs